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ABSTRACT

The first year of school reform in Chicago was devoted to preparation for governance and the election of local school councils to serve in each school. The second year of school reform was devoted to continued preparation for governance and attempts to restructure classroom instruction. The importance of restructuring education to match how children learn is amplified by examining the research that supports four programs that are being used experimentally in 116 schools. The first program is "More Effective Schools," concentrates on having schools adopt practices to improve student attendance, behavior, and achievement. The second and third are similar programs and are entitled "Whole Language Schools" and "Coalition of Essential Schools." Program strategies include teachers as learners, explorers, coaches, and facilitators; students as active learners; interdisciplinary teaching; cooperative learning; and use of behavioral objectives. The fourth program is "Creating a New Approach to Learning"--Project CANAL. The goal is to raise the achievement level of Black and Hispanic students in Chicago schools. The content of staff training sessions to achieve this goal is outlined. An examination of the research that supports the use of each program provides substantiation for the strategies used as well as additional techniques to encourage greater effectiveness. (12 references) (RR)

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CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM: YEAR TWO -

RESTRUCTURING INSTRUCTION

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CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM: YEAR TWO

RESTRUCTURING INSTRUCTION

The school year 1989-90, the first year of elected school reform in Chicago was devoted to preparation for governance. Local School Councils were elected to serve at each of the 542 schools in the fall of 1989. During the winter and spring of 1990 the councils received training in shared decision-making, principal selection and monitoring and budgeting.

The second year of school reform, 1990-91, was devoted to continued preparation for governance and attempts to restructure classroom instruction. The school reform law mandated the restructuring of instruction in order to improve student attendance, behavior and achievement.

Out of 542 schools only 116 appeared to be seriously funded for restructuring classroom instruction. The central Board of Education budgeted only $1,500 for each of its 542 schools to train Local School Council members in the skills of shared decision-making, principal selection and monitoring, and budgeting. Some individual schools secured foundation and corporate funding to train councils and teachers in other areas of governance as well as restructuring instructional skills. However, the author's research disclosed only 116 programs that were either privately or publically funded to give a semblance of indepth training to teachers in order to restructure instruction i.e. programs that gave training to staff and parents beyond week -end retreats. These programs and the approximate number of schools involved are as follows:

- More Effective Schools (AKA - Effective Schools)	20
- Whole Language Schools	5
- Coalition of Essential Schools	11
- Creating a New Approach to Learning, Project CANAL	80

BACKGROUND

Research indicates that traditional means of teaching is not working for minority students (Gursky, 1991). School reform of the 1980's focused upon ways to improve curriculum and instruction for all American students, including black and Hispanic minorities.

In the early 80's the reform movement concentrated on increased teacher accountability, high stakes standardized tests, higher academic standards, rigorous curricula, better teacher training, school restructuring and school site-based management. However, in national school reform discussion, little mention was given to how children learn and restructuring instruction to match how they learn. Restructuring instruction has not yet become a dominant issue of the current school reform movement (Gursky, 1991).

Chicago school reform followed the national pattern, that is a concentration on governance. In the First year of reform, following passage of the 1988 reform law, PA 85-1418, the schools concentrated mainly on governance matters such as election of Local School Councils at each school, council member training in monitoring and selection of principals, development of school improvement plans and budgeting.

During 1990-91, the second year of reform, some schools began to give attention to improvements within the classroom such as curriculum and instruction. The January, 1991 Annual Conference of the Chicago City-Wide Coalition for School Reform declared its strong support for the System's plan to concentrate on reform in the classroom. A small number of schools with private and public funding gave in-service to staff in order to begin the long term process of improving teaching methods.

In this paper, the author seeks to amplify the importance of restructuring instruction to match how students learn. The importance is amplified through examining four programs that are being used experimentally in 116 Chicago schools, i.e. More Effective Schools, Whole Language Schools, Coalition of Essential Schools, and Project CANAL.

FOUR PROGRAMS TO RESTRUCTURE INSTRUCTION

More Effective Schools

The first Technique to be described is More Effective Schools. Through research and discussion the author found that the intention of school reform activists was to use "More Effective Schools Research Findings" in order to motivate schools to make improvements. Reform activists wanted schools to concentrate on improvements in student attendance, behavior and achievement (Fitch, 1992). The research findings call for schools to adopt practices that cause:

- Principals to provide vigorous and consistent leadership that enables staff, students and parents to develop a common mission and vision that gives them greater bonding.

- School climates to be safe, attractive, pleasant, orderly and serious but not oppressive.
- Staff to believe that all children can learn.
- Staff to establish reading, writing and arithmetic as high priorities in all curricular and co-curricular areas.
- Parents to actively and enthusiastically work to improve the learning program.
- Staff development and in-service to be closely tied to the school's specific mission, goals, objectives and problems.
- A high priority for "Time On Task."
- Improved student and staff attendance.
- Improved student behavior and staff performance.
- High expectation of student achievement by staff, parents and students.
- Private and public funding sources to be used to meet the school's specific mission, goals, objectives and problems.

In addition to the above items, Fitch (1992) advocates the practice of "never-ending-improvement" in order to make the efforts for high attendance, behavior and achievement both consistent and continuous. Twenty Chicago schools practice "More Effective Schools" strategies.

Whole Language Schools and Coalition of Essential Schools

The second and third programs investigated by the author are the practices of "Whole Language Schools" and "Coalition of Essential Schools," which are similar. The Whole Language School technique is used in Upper Arlington, Ohio elementary and secondary schools and five Chicago elementary schools. Coalition of Essential Schools technique was developed by Dr. Theodore Sizer of Brown University. Essential Schools practices are used in 162 Coalition secondary schools throughout the United States including 11 schools in Chicago. Practices followed in the Whole Language and Coalition of Essential Schools are as follows:

1. Teachers are learners and explorers who constantly observe student need and improvise lessons to meet student need.

2. Teachers are coaches and facilitators rather than merely dispensers of information.

3. Teachers who serve as coaches and facilitators require greater in-service and preparation time than those who merely dispense information.

4. Teachers and students determine what activities will

occur in the classroom rather than the textbook author.

5. Students are active learners and workers who initiate study rather than mere vessels which passively accept information.

6. Students keep daily journals of information that are relevant to the curricula. In addition, the Whole Language schools encourage students to write and publish books based upon the journal information, while Coalition of Essential Schools require students to demonstrate skills learned through Final Exhibitions.

7. Interdisciplinary teaching and learning are used to reinforce all subject matter areas.

8. Cooperative learning and small group dynamics are used so that students may serve as tutors and mentors to one another.

9. Behavioral objectives are used that meet the needs of students at all levels of learning ability (Sizer, 1984 and Wolk, 1991).

Creating A New Approach To Learning: Project CANAL

The fourth program observed by the author was Project CANAL, the acronym for Creating A New Approach To Learning. The goal is to raise the achievement level of black and Hispanic students in The Chicago Schools. A major objective for the period 1988 to 1993 is for 50% of the students in the system to perform at or above national norms (Chicago Public Schools, 1988). Currently less than 34% of the system's students perform at or above national norms (Hess, 1991).

In order to achieve the CANAL goal, a comprehensive training program was designed to support school improvement. Plans were developed by eighty schools to meet the specific needs of students at each school. During the initial year of participation, principals, teachers, ancillary staff, parents, and students attended training sessions at a training center and at the local school site. Training sessions included:

1. Training in school site-based management that enables principals, teachers, ancillary staff, parents, and students to develop and manage school programs through cooperative planning and governance. The participants experience:

- Techniques in team building
- Conflict Resolution

- Collegial Planning
- Peer Support
- Practices based on More Effective Schools Research
- School Site-Based Management Principles

2. Staff Development to improve student attendance, behavior and achievement. The program focuses upon the effective use of:

- Needs Assessments
- Innovative Curriculum and Instruction
- Improved Classroom Organization
- Positive School Climate
- Knowledge of Cultural Pluralism

3. Motivation of parents to become the school's partner in improving student attendance, behavior and achievement. Parents experience:

- More Effective Schools Research Practices
- Principles of School Site-Based Management
- Group Dynamics
- Positive School Climate
- Knowledge of Cultural Pluralism and Differences

4. Use of student councils in shared-decision making. Training in shared-decision making enables students to directly address their personal, educational, and vocational needs.

The CANAL training sessions were conducted minimally once per month at the center or at the local school. Substitute staff were provided to cover classes and all ancillary services. A core planning team representing all grade levels and/or departments developed plans for training sessions (Chicago Public Schools, 1988).

TRAINING TEACHERS TO RESTRUCTURE INSTRUCTION

A Chicago area school and member of the Coalition of Essential Schools invited this author to serve as an observer as well as one of it's trainers over a six week period in June and July, 1991. Sixty-three participating teachers nearly evenly represented the school's mini-schools of Business and Finance and Manufacturing Technology.

The initial orientation included a video indicating that the United States was falling even further behind Japanese competitors. Additionally, blacks and Hispanics were losing even greater ground. Black and Hispanic students start school at nearly an equal level with white and Asiatic students on

standardized tests but lose ground over the twelve years to graduation, which is alarming (Chicago Tribune; June 15, 1988).

However, researchers of More Effective Schools found that losing ground was not inevitable and that certain practices would improve achievement of black and Hispanic students (Fitch, 1992). These practices are described in this paper under the titles: More Effective Schools; Whole Language Curriculum; Coalition for Essential Schools; and Creating A New Approach to Learning: Project CANAL. The researchers hypothesized that use of the More Effective Schools practices would improve student attendance, behavior and achievement.

The 1986 research of Goldstein, Lang and Steward documented that More Effective Schools:

- Improved in student attendance and achievement.
- Reduced graffiti and vandalism; and
- Managed the changes at minimal cost.

Additional research findings with similar conclusions was conducted by Edmonds in 1979, Stevens in 1985, and Comer in 1988 (Fitch, 1992).

The next seven training days for the Coalition of Essential School were devoted to topics of teacher as learner, student as worker, teacher as coach and facilitator, and working together as a team. Teams developed interdisciplinary lesson plans. Questions such as "What do we want our graduates to be like?" and, "What do we want our graduates to know?" were used to develop goals for grades 9 through 12. Questions such as "How can my subject help yours to achieve a goal?" and, "How can your subject help me to achieve a goal?" were used by teams of teachers with representatives from English, Social Studies, Math, Science, and vocational areas to develop a set of correlated lesson plans focused on reinforcing one another's subject area.

For the next ten days the author and two other professors provided the Coalition of Essential School participants with a course in "Curriculum Materials for Today's Schools." One professor was responsible for teaching the philosophy and principles underlying the Coalition of Essential Schools Practices. The second professor taught human relations, leadership and group dynamics i.e. the skills required to work as teams to resolve problems, make interdisciplinary school plans and lesson plans, and to team-teach. The author taught techniques used to integrate behavioral objectives and cooperative learning into the interdisciplinary lesson plans.

John Goodlad's 1984 research was used as a basis of training information. Four messages were given to teachers:

1. Clear teacher directions, correction of errors and praise for success can increase student achievement.

2. Learning is enhanced when students work together in small groups, deciding with the teacher what and how to study.

3. The more time devoted by students to lesson decision making, the less time the teacher must spend in disciplining.

4. Students enjoy classes where they have simple models and examples to follow when practicing new skills, therefore complex models in English, social studies and science must be analyzed and presented in simpler steps in order to enhance achievement.

In this author's first training session with the participants, it was pointed out that interdisciplinary planning, teaching and learning could better endure if integrated with individualized teaching through behavioral objectives and cooperative learning. The definition of these terms follow.

Interdisciplinary planning, teaching and learning means planning, teaching and learning that correlates or integrates topics from two or more different disciplines in order to reinforce and increase student learning. Examples of interdisciplinary planning includes math and science combinations, English and social studies combinations, and teaching how to write in English, social studies, math, science and a vocational subject, that is, writing across the curriculum.

Individualized teaching through behavioral objectives is an effort to meet the instructional needs of all levels of students in a heterogeneous class by developing behavioral objectives which meet the needs of all levels of students. All levels of ability include average, above average, and below average students; special education and bilingual students; and academically talented students. The objectives must gain the immediate attention of each of the students in these categories, hold their attention, and motivate them to complete the lesson's activities.

The behavioral objectives used to individualize instruction were those developed by Benjamin Bloom and others (Oliva, 1988). They were psychomotor (doing), affective (feeling), and cognitive (thinking).

The other two trainers and the author hypothesized that below average, special education and bilingual students need to be given psychomotor and affective activities before proceeding to cognitive activities. They further hypothesized that above

average and academically talented students would arrive at the cognitive activities through the psychomotor and affective activities early on and could be used to tutor low achievers. Another goal was to motivate educational growth in the academically talented through challenging activities. Individualized teaching through behavioral objectives combined with cooperative learning enables teachers to work with heterogeneous student groups as an alternative to homogeneous groups.

Cooperative Learning is an instructional method in which students work in small heterogeneous groups in order to help one another learn (Strother, 1990). Cooperative Learning improves student attitude toward school, learning and one another. It teaches diverse students to work cooperatively and develop skills that are useful for life at home, in civic and social groups, and at work. Slavin (1991) delineated the advantages of cooperative learning as follows:

- Emphasizes thinking skills and increases higher order thinking.
- Is an alternative to ability grouping, remediation and special education.
- Is a means of improving race relations.
- Is a way to prepare students for a life of collaboration on the job.
- Supplements teacher's instruction, giving students opportunities to discuss and practice skills introduced by the teacher.
- Achievement is equally positive for high, average and low achievers.
- Positive effects are observed in growth of self-esteem, inter-group relations, acceptance of the academically handicapped, and attitude toward school.
- Places responsibility to learn upon the student.
- Increases student attendance and "time on task." In addition to these advantages Hyman in Strother (1990) stated that cooperative learning was also relatively inexpensive as an alternative to homogeneous grouping. At least it would cost no more.

Strother (1990) provided additional advice on how to maximize cooperative learning:

- Do a good job of teaching before dividing the class into groups.
- Establish standards for group behavior and a reward system.
- Reward groups for improvement.
- Set goals that create a group attitude of "we sink or swim together."

- Create balanced heterogeneous groups. A size of five seems best.
- Plan tasks that allow every member to contribute something, whatever their ability.
- Monitor group activities to be sure that all members make a contribution.
- Model effective, democratic leadership skills, e.g. listening and paraphrasing and brainstorming.
- Provide for multiple ways of learning through multiple ways of teaching, e.g. psychomotor, affective, and cognitive activities.
- Require individual student reports as well as a summary of group's consensus.

Based upon the author's experience with the Coalition of Essential School teachers who received six weeks of training in how to restructure instruction, it is suggested that group members alternate group leadership. The teachers and their students must understand that they are responsible for their own learning and that of other group members. They and their students must demonstrate mastery of the work. Both must be able to explain what they are learning to one another. Both are expected to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts and provide appropriate leadership. Finally, they are expected to assess and report to one another on how well they are working together (Guskey, 1990).

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON COOPERATIVE LEARNING

According to Johnson and Johnson (Slavin, 1991), it takes teachers approximately two years to internalize the concept of cooperative learning. The more productive models of cooperative learning were Student Team Learning and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition. Student Team Learning involves students working together to learn something, trying to endure that each team member learns, and ensuring that each member makes a contribution to the learning experience. In the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition model, the team is composed of six students (two average, two above average, and two below average ability).

While the teacher instructs one group level, the remaining students study with their team partners. Each team is required to develop and publish a book.

Based upon his analyses, Slavin (1991) concluded the following:

- Student achievement improved in 84 percent of the studies that used Student Team Learning or Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition.

- High achievers gain as well as low achievers.
- People who cooperate learn to like one another.
- Relationships among regular and mainstreamed students improve.
- Emotionally disturbed students improve in attendance, behavior, and "time on task."
- Low income potential dropout students improve in attendance and reduce their contacts with the police.

Holweide School in Cologne, Germany began using cooperative learning methods circa 1980. At that time it's dropout rate and rate of students passing college examinations were similar to other high schools in Germany i.e. the respective rates were 16 to 19 percent and 27 percent. Today the rates have improved dramatically: Less than one percent dropout and sixty percent pass the college examinations (Lewis, 1989).

CONCLUSION

Improvements can and must be made in the classroom in order to improve student attendance, behavior, and achievement and school climate. The type of training offered under four programs i.e. More Effective Schools, Whole Language Schools, Coalition of Essential Schools, and Project CANAL appear to fit the needs of all students including minority students.

This author has added additional techniques to the techniques described under the four programs. He suggests the addition of individualized teaching through behavioral objectives and cooperative learning in order to enhance the benefits of interdisciplinary planning, teaching and learning. Finally, he suggests that instructional leaders encourage and market never-ending improvement for educational programs.

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